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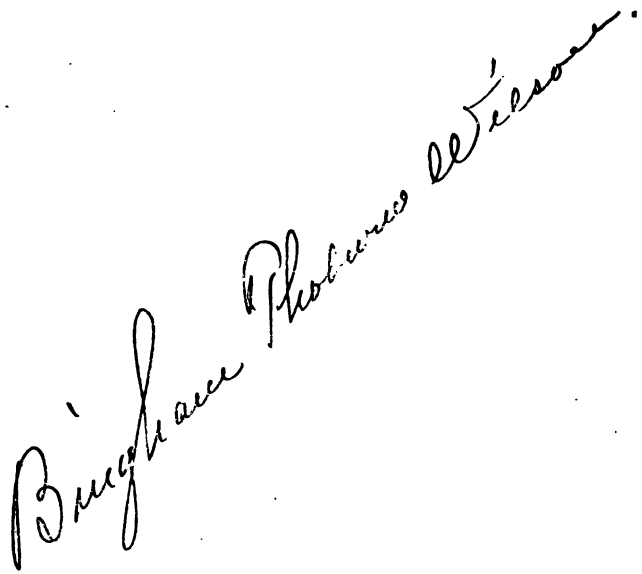
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The Hypocrite

BINGHAM THOBURN WILSON







THE HYPOCRITE

In speaking of the decline in poetic reading both in England and America, some recent writer has quite aptly said: "The reason that poetry is no longer read by the general public is not because of a lack of interest in poetry, but because of the lack of something interesting in poetry." This is unquestionably true. The world has produced but few men who have told us stories in verse, with sufficient tact and skill to allay the constant reminder that we are reading a measured line in which the rhyme is the ever-predominating factor.

In presenting "The Hypocrite," the publishers feel justified in claiming the work to be the output of genius, and it is doubtful if any more beautiful poetic descriptions or comparisons can be found in the entire wealth of our language than in this remarkable poem.

The text of the work itself is quite liable to cause some discussion, as the poet has made use of the Tenth Commandment—"Thou shalt not covet," etc.—as a vehicle for his story, which he has handled, however, with remarkable skill. But his strong story by suggestion, the beautiful manner of its telling, and the charming euphony throughout, will establish Mr. Wilson's place in American literature long after his sun has set and the critics of the creed he teaches are all forgotten.

The poem is truly a twentieth-century poem. It is told in the first person of the pronoun, and, strange to say, we know not even the name of the man who is telling such a wonderful tale relative to himself.

The real purpose of the story lies in the consilium or advice, and the whole is a most powerful protest against the misalliance of Beauty with rich, licentious Age—a stroke against the repulsive money-marriages that we see every day. The scene of the entire story lies upon the island of Manhattan, and carries with it a poetic dedication to the statue of Diana on the tower of Madison Square Garden, but is inscribed to the poet's personal friend, Hon. Frank D. Creamer, ex-Sheriff of King's County.

Mr. Wilson's characters are drawn true to the times, but his poetry is that of another and far more poetic age.

The Hypocrite. Bingham Thoburn Wilson. 12mo. Cloth. Gilt top, fine Strathmore, deckle-edge paper. Price, $1.00.

The Lyceum Publishing Co., 44 Court Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. (Temple Bar Building).

The Hypocrite

5-24-1910

The Hypocrite

A Poem

By

Bingham Thoburn Wilson

Author of
"The Tale of the Phantom Yacht,"
"Ye Mountaineer,"
"The Village of Hide and Seek," etc.



The Lyceum Publishing Co.
Brooklyn, N. Y.

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The Tenth Commandment

THOU shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.—Exodus xx. 17.

M. F. CROW MAY 27'10 27ct3

To Hon. Frank D. Creamer,

Ex-Sheriff Kings County, etc., etc.

My Dear Sir: It is a time-honored custom, I believe, among men who aspire to court the tuneful Muse, to honor their feeble efforts by inscribing them to some more worthy personage whose judgment rises far above the calumny of criticism or the scarcely less cruel adulations of praise.

Believe me, sir, by inditing the following poem to you, it is entirely foreign to my expectations to hope to increase a personal popularity that already greatly overshadows whatever influence my unworthy pen might strive to create; but rather, instead, I do hope to solicit the approval of your better judgment, in recording a vigorous protest against such wanton indulgences as the story in part deplores.

In the construction of the poem, the mere matter of versification has interested me but little. For I stoutly maintain that a book without a purpose is like fruit without flavor, a flower without perfume,

an instrument devoid of melody; in fact—a mere semblance of the thing it is intended to represent, and I therefore wish to call your attention to the vital causes that have given this work origin.

Previously let me state, although I wish to be brief, I am well aware that in any other age it would have seemed heresy to cast an eye of criticism upon the wording of one of the Ten Commandments. But at this late day, when the light of reason is beginning to show its guiding hand in most all our creeds, we can speak of the mistakes of man relative to that "good book," without fear of creating consternation; for while doubtless the Bible was divinely inspired when written, we must remember that it was poor, frail, erroneous man who translated it into our tongue. The Tenth Commandment, when reduced *ad extremum*, simply implies: "Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbor's." To covet means to desire, and to desire that which is beautiful or of value is just as natural, as to spurn that which is repulsive and useless. The fault originally, it seems to me,

was not with the Commandment, but with the translators of the Commandment, and I believe I am justified in the contention that, in order to avoid making hypocrites of us all, we must either coin a word to properly interpret the biblical meaning of the word covet, as implied, or resort to the interjection of an adverb, thereby making the Commandment read: "Thou shalt not *wrongfully* covet anything that is thy neighbor's."

I advance this argument to justify the position that I assume, although, at most, the Commandment is only a convenient vehicle for the story.

Here in America we are confronted by what we might term two great national diseases, striving alike to annihilate the physical and moral man. They are Consumption and Divorce. Think not that the former is to be the more dreaded of the two. Consumption may lay waste the frail body of the individual, and place its emaciated, hapless victim, with merciless hand, deep in the cold grave. But when the moral obligations of manhood are gone, when the marriage rite has lost the binding sacred-

ness of its vow, not only the individual, but the very national life will sink into a state of beastly degeneracy that is far worse than death.

I have always considered marriage as a sacred and holy relation, rather than one of mere legal obligation by civil contract, and the very non-realization of this fact by the law has robbed the Church of much of its power to correct the rapidly increasing evil of divorce.

It would indeed seem unjust to lay the universal blame for the existence of this immoral octopus at the door of any one particular cause. But I firmly contend that the misalliance of rich decrepitude with folly-blindfolded, or designing beauty, is responsible for a percentage of divorce far in excess of its proportion to the number of people married. Such misalliance, on the part of Age, may seem like a travesty upon the virtues of second childhood; but on the part of Youth it amounts to willful and downright prostitution.

And now permit me to humbly inscribe this Poem to you; hoping that the spirit of its theme will

somewhat discourage such horrifying examples of matrimonial wantonness.

With a feeling of deepest respect, I beg to call myself

Your friend,

BINGHAM THOBURN WILSON.

NEW YORK CITY, BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN,
January 10, 1907.

DEDICATION

TO fair Diana, and her many wiles,
Who, from the Garden-tower, looks down and smiles;
Guards o'er the park, and watches o'er a throng
Of the gay revelers, that stroll along.
Summer and Winter, Morning, Noon, and Night—
There, as she stands with bow and arrow bright,
Seems that she says: "Heed Thou dull Care no more—
Covet what happiness life holds in store,
Gather it in, the mite that Heaven lends,
Meet at my feet and share it with thy friends."
To fair Diana, and her many wiles,
Who, from the Garden-tower, looks down and smiles.

INTRODUCTION

ISLE of the Blest! Fair City by the Sea!
Hark to the song a child would sing of thee;
Not that I might aspire by simple lays;
A hundred tongues in all-united praise
Might not aspire, in one melodious chime,
To sound the praise that all in all is thine.
Sea-set Elysium! Fair in every part—
Imperial City! Thou hast won my heart;
Like the fond child adores its mother's knee,
Fondly I came, as fondly cling to thee,
And still more fond, re-revel 'mid thy views,
Trespass thy parks, or roam thine avenues.
Fair are thy days; thy nights as wondrous fair,
As the gay throng that mingles with thee there;
Fair are thy charms to Beauty's eye unfurled;
And thy fair women, fairest in the world;
Hark to my babbling song, a feeble rill,
And when 'tis o'er condemn me if you will.
Isle of the Blest! Fair City by the Sea!
Hark to the song a child would sing of thee.



REVERA

ONE Sabbath, as the strolling mass I viewed,
With idle steps and idler thoughts imbued,
I chanced to heed, vibrating on the air,
The solemn tolls that called all souls to prayer;
And not by time or occupation pressed,
Crossed the green park and entered with the rest.
Silent I sat, intent to learn and hear;
The Choir sang and charmed my listening ear;
Sang of the night in which all stars are gone;
Sang of a light to lead us kindly on;
And oft I thought, as there in humbled pride
I sat alone, that I must needs that guide;
When came the Reverend Sir, and as he said;
"Oh let us pray." In reverence bowed my head.

Then from the chanceled pulpit he looked down,
Gracing the scene in surpliced, snowy gown;
Soft the responses rose, as softly fell;
I had forgotten, once I knew them well,



For I recalled now, in the days gone by,
How they had taught me promptly to reply;
And the good Pastor, when the Choir was done,
Read us the Ten Commandments, one by one;
Read of Mount Sinai's smoky, burning face;
Read of the tribes assembled at its base;
Told of the sights miraculous they saw;
Pictured the tablets as God wrote the Law;
Spoke of the fiery paths that Moses trod;
Took for his text, the Tenth Command of God—
"Thou shalt not Covet!" 'Neath each burning
word,
Much did I feel impressed with what I heard.

Scarce was his story only partly told,
When, 'mid the rush of many a silken fold,
Some tardy worshiper, delayed o'er long,
Entered the church and braved the staring throng,
And as I glanced aside—Oh Joy complete!
A dream's fulfillment stepped into my seat.
She sank demurely at the farther end,
Prayer-book in hand and gave a strict attend.

Nor once she seemed as conscious of her pride,
Nor once she turned a fleeting glance aside;
Strict to a fault; with reverence for her creed,
Gathered each word with all-apparent greed.
Such faultless gown, such eyes of softened tone.
Such perfect form, such hands, I ne'er had known;
While, as on hassock she devoutly kneeled
In pious mien, one thoughtless glance revealed,
Deep in the twilight of the cushioned pew,
Just the suspicion of a dainty shoe,
Blending its shapely shadows with the floor,
When solemn worship bade me gaze no more.
Vain now the discourse fell upon my ear,
For once, I cared far more to think than hear;
Such heavenly eyes I thought; so wondrous grand,
But thought just then about that Tenth Command—
"Thou shalt not covet!" And before I knew,
Broke the whole Law while seated in the pew,

Turned from a sly review with steadied head,
But never heard a word the Reverend said.

I just remember passing to the street,
Amid a throng of slow-delaying feet,
Where many a languid step of conscious pride
Paused on its way, to choke the human tide;
And as fair fashion close about me pressed;
Descending from the church-door with the rest,
I marked the eboned coach, with Coat of Arms,
That, to myself I said, awaits her charms;
Watched her but pause an instant 'mid the
throng.
Caught her shy glance as swift she rolled along.
My eyes kept vigil as she passed away;
My heart in vain seemed coaxing her to stay;
Coaxing and pleading as she passed from view,
'Mid the rich travel of the avenue;
Pleading her stay, and after she was gone,
With the sweet memory of her still plead on.
A sense of hopelessness awoke my dream,
Quickly I turned from the deserted scene;

As with the crowd I then kept measured time,
Saw by the clock it was the hour to dine,
But hunger now and I were far apart,
For food can never satisfy the heart;
Emotions rise to guide us as they may,
While beauty oft scorns appetite away,
Saying, as it the viands all condemn—
"Angels don't dine. Why should, who worship them?"
Thus did I muse as 'mid the throng I walked,
Well, call it mused, more to myself I talked;
Talked like some babbling fool, deploring fate;
Ambled along with careless idle gait;
Shunned the "Café," nor touched a glass of wine;
Glanced at my watch, impatient marked the time;
Dreamed as I strolled, about "My lady fair,"
Jumped on a car, and rode to "God knows where."

THE DANCE

A HUNDRED lights illume the gilded hall,
Light steps and lighter hearts whirl in the ball;
To point to beauty's Queen, a hopeless task,
Where all seem fairer than a choice might ask.
I stand apart. The glittering chandelier
Dazzles the trembling jewels at her ear,
To tempt my eyes and coax their vision where
Her languid smile seems unknown times as fair;
Oh Tenth Commandment! As she glideth by,
And turns within the dance, I catch her eye,
And follow closely 'mid the dizzy whirl,
Until one bank of life obscures my girl.

No peace of soul assuaged my stormy breast,
I sought a partner and we joined the rest;
Onward we went, the fates seemed doubly kind,
As in "My Lady's" wake we whirled behind.
I marked her partner staggering through the dance.
A withered form; some man of high finance;

Brow-beating frown; a single glance that swept,
Told me that age had manacled his step,
And well I knew he'd give his worldly gains
For the young blood that coursed within my veins.
Three times we passed them on the crowded floor,
And every time he turned he looked me o'er;
Measured suspiciously my every pose,
Stared in my face, or scanned my eboned clothes,
Until, I half conceived, 'twas his belief
That I was some impostor, rogue, or thief.
Yet he was wrong. If thievings such be crime,
'Twas she who stole, the fault was nowise mine;
Stole my poor heart, contentment all destroyed
And left my bosom one wild aching void.
Thus, as we circled 'mid the whirling maze,
Vainly I strove to shun his searching gaze;
Thus, 'mid the dance, I caught the sweeping eye,
That fairly scorned me when I passed him by;
But, while at every turn he frowned on me,
Each time I vowed to claim a penalty;
Aid the fair culprit, if no other way;
Spirit her off from all the dancers gay;

Capture the recreant; make my arms the jail;
Lock her within, nor take his bond for bail.
Thus, while I scanned the fleeting beauty o'er,
My partner wearied and we quit the floor.

And now as she again comes into view,
Eyes speak to eyes and souls commune anew;
For hearts can speak although the lips be
dumb;
Love breathes its tender language with no tongue;
Sweeter in accent than the voice can lend,
And tells a tale that words don't comprehend:
Yet not one thoughtless glance she gave to me
But that was modest, strict propriety.
Her form divine seems not of human mold;
Fairer by far than mortals might behold;
Fairer by far than when before we met,
In the same pew; I never shall forget!
To my adoring eyes, now far more fair,
Than whom Ephesians kneeled before in prayer.
See how her lips are parted. Like the snow—
Arched is her throat, or swells her breast below;

While with luxuriant wave, and sumptuous fold,
Heaven has graced her with a crown of gold,
And woven in that crown each radiant hue
That earliest morn imparts amid the dew;
As if the sunlight from its golden throne,
Exiled by choice, had made that crown its home.
Now as her partner falters, old and weak,
Mark how the crimson mantles to her cheek;
Mark how she scarce returns his fawning smile;
Mark how her tempting steps increase the while;
Until, before all eyes, "My Lady Fair,"
Moves like some spirit gliding through the air;
Yet all pretension plainly seems to say,
That truant joy is absent, far away.
Now as she whirls amid the dizzy throng,
Coaxing my envy and my eyes along,
While I almost despair a meeting vain,
Dance-tired, her partner treads upon her train.

Scarce had I ceased the feasting of my eyes,
Then to my heart I thus soliloquized—



Would, on her gown, you were yon blushing Rose,
Breasting the tide of life that ebbs and flows;
Hoping you might a moment's time beguile,
As on thy form she condescends to smile:
Oh that you were the dimmest pearl that lies,
Circling her mellow throat amid her sighs,
Never for once the endless joy disdain,
Proud of your lot to hear her but complain:
Or sweeter still—when twilight's solemn hour
Calls her to vespers in fond slumber's bower;
Where many a rambling rose adorns the vine,
And morning-glories still at night entwine;
Where Ivy climbs along the casement wall,
And where the dews of Heaven delight to fall;
Might you but be the jewel that with care,
Guards as "My Lady" clasps her hands in
prayer:
When, as I paused: Behold—I startled saw,
Moses before me with that tenth great law.

Then to myself I reasoned. Might she be—
By right of law, a vested property;

Claimed by the rich Decrepit, as his right
Who through the dance went staggering to-night;
Purchased and paid for, like some common thing;
December nursing in the lap of Spring,
In this degenerate age, does scarce appall,
Where money marks the acme of it all:
For in these times, when Beauty seems to know,
Naught but the power of wealth; the gilded show;
These very tendencies, themselves presage,
Youth's misalliance with repulsive Age:
Led to its cankerous nest by worldly gain,
With head half bowed in sorrow, half in shame;
Enters the web of its licentious greed,
And lives—A flower companion to the weed;
Rebuked by Love's traditions of the past,
And dies by conscience more rebuked at last.
Though she be owned by purchase: is it true—
Because a flower in some garden grew,
That I, a passer-by, should not desire
To pause outside the gate, but to admire;
Flatter the beauty of its cherished bloom,
Smile on its form, or breathe its rich perfume?

Such be the truth. Then should a fate unkind,
Grant owners vision but strike others blind;
Curse us who still appreciate, with eyes
That see all beauty, only to despise,
Lest we be tempted for a time to pause,
And break the tenth of Moses' holy laws.

Dissatisfied, my mind inquiring still,
Thus roamed the fertile fields of thought at
will.
Such be the truth. Why has "My Lady Fair"
The very sunlight in her golden hair?
Why to her sparkling eyes; if such be true,
Did Heaven lend its deep ethereal blue?
Such be the truth. Why is it Nature kissed
Her brow with beauty that I can't resist?
If such be true; why to her many wiles
Has Heaven added countless more in smiles,
Or planted that wild laugh 'mid features coy,
To drive a man distracted with its joy?
Hush Reason! Hush the prattle of the brain—
Behold thy Lady in the dance again.

Not in the dance, the whirling waltz is o'er;
See how with queenly grace she leaves the floor.
Crushed by the passers in the crowded aisles,
I pause to give her room, she bows and smiles,
When for a time I vow to not be bound
By all the stones that Moses ever found.
A thousand reasons justify the cause,
God made her beauty as he made these laws,
Made it to be admired, so why not then,
Covet such pleasures with all other men?
"Thou shalt not covet!" But her wondrous eyes
Challenge the law and dare me otherwise;
To covet but her company alone,
Is sin within the meaning of the stone;
Thus as I let my reason more abound,
Heedless of all the merry throng around,
Some dear acquaintance bids my dreaming stay,
As he presents me and we stroll away.

THE GARDEN

OUTSIDE, the summer night's delightful cool
Led us unnoticed to a shady pool.
"The dance was tiresome!" So at least she said;
"Her Husband much preferred 'The Grill' instead,
And shunned the maddening crowd." When on the shore
Her order fell, she vowed to dance no more.
Still was the breeze. The night's delicious calm
Scattered the dew, and soothed us with its balm;
Over our heads a towering oak on high
Seemed as it swept the stars within the sky;
And the low boughs that sheltered us from sight
Strengthened our vision in the moonless night.
Oft could I see each subtle charm possessed,
Rise with her smiles, like rose her snowy breast,
And often too, I bantered on each charm,
While she confiding leaned upon my arm,
Nor did a passing flattery, but surmise,
That I beheld new joys within her eyes.

Damp was the lawn. I warned her to beware;
"Oh, no!" she cried. "I never have a care,"
And as she toyed her skirts, amid the dew
I caught the glitter of a dainty shoe;
That same dear dainty foot that I had seen,
Once in the church upon the hassock green.
Closely I watched her wandering glance look down,
And in that instant marked a troubled frown,
As in vexatious tones, she quickly cried;
"There! In the dance my slipper came untied."
Who to such task would not devoutly spring?
Quickly I kneeled to tie the faithless string;
And as before her foot I bended low,
And with the lace I drew an awkward bow;
Though truant strand at first could scarce be found,
And semidarkness hovered all around,
I yet beheld an instep arched and trim,
As ever graced a throne on queenly limb:
How firmly tied, how well performed the task,
I do not know, I did not dare to ask;
I only know; from truth the duty came;
With heart afire, and mind fast catching flame,

And tardy hand, I brought the joy to close,
And all a-tremble from the ground arose.

How long we viewed the night I cannot tell,
Drinking its glory in one silent spell.
Far to the east, the swarming Pleiades,
Rose in a glittering cluster, through the trees;
Northward, on high, bold Ursa Major came,
Prowling the starry sky with tail aflame,
Where, in the Arctic Circle, dimly shone,
The faithful "Guide Star" of the Frigid Zone;
And high o'er all, within the Milky Way,
Millions of beacons shone with glittering ray,
As if Creation had, in wrathful ire,
Crossed through the sky and left one path of fire.
I pointed out bold Mercury, then Mars;
Her ear swept my lapel to view the stars,
And lingered there, as guiding far her view,
I named the many wandering orbs I knew,
And some I didn't know, but wisely feigned,
And let false fancy form long-sounding names;



When, with a merry laugh, she glanced aside;
"I think you know them nearly all!" she cried;
Then cast a sweeping glance, where, in the west,
Venus seemed winking as she sank to rest.

Through all this scene, "My Lady," wondrous fair,
Stood at my side, the starlight in her hair.
And once, when as I drew her over near,
A ray, reflected from her jeweled ear,
Caused me to start; her glove fell to the ground;
Glad of the chance, I reached it with a bound.
We talked of Ethics, of the Church and Pew,
Talked of the Choir, and of the Dominie too;
"All of the world," she said; "was but a cheat—
Ninety and Nine per cent of all, deceit."
We talked of dancing, while she toyed her glove,
It seemed we talked of everything, but Love;
We talked of Music, of the gilded Show,
And long we talked, until 'twas time to go;
"The hour was late, the air was chilly, cold,
Her Husband waited, he was rather old,

We'd meet again"; I answered with a sigh;
She waved a jeweled hand a fond "Good-Bye,"
When, as I turned within the night alone,
There Moses stood with that tenth slab of stone.

THE ARGUMENT

THERE are some raptures that no King hath learned,
To him, the simple word a wish hath earned;
All other pleasures are as meek alloys;
Anticipation is the King of Joys,
And oft, the mere desire for what we prize,
Is ten-fold greater than to realize.
Breathes there a living man who dares to say,
He ne'er hath coveted throughout his day?
To have and hold all men on earth aspire,
And things take value from that mere desire.
The useless nag, no longer fit to load,
Dies without shelter on the public road;
The worthless cur, now friendless in retreat,
Drags its poor starving bones along the street;
None covet, hence none value; Men revere
Only the thing some other man holds dear.

The pious Parson goes his lonely way,
A great respect his almost only pay,

And as he sees a harvest's bounteous yield,
Stacked for the threshing, in a neighboring field,
And thinks, what small reward brings work divine,
Says in his heart, "I wish that field were mine!"
The prayerful Christian and his faithful wife,
Poor and kept poor by piety through life,
Pass, as they journey to the house of prayer,
The mansion of some rake—A Millionaire;
When, as they think of the poor shack they own,
Thoughtless declare, "I'd like to have that home!"

"Thou shalt not covet!" Oh Immortal Shade!
All men must covet, else where is there trade?
Business would cease, the merchants close their doors,
And ships lie idly rotting on our shores;
Houses fall to decay, and toil rebel,
While life on earth would be one living hell.
Ah Moses! When you made that wondrous find,
Why did you not that Tablet leave behind,
Leave it behind, to lighten up your load,
And save posterity this conscience goad?

For you it was who first that law transgressed,
By coveting that tablet with the rest.
Oh Heaven! With this my one petition bear;
I ne'er as yet o'erburdened Thee with prayer;
Heed it, that Immortality may know,
The one great cause of half our mortal woe.
This be my prayer: "Repeal that Law alone—
Oh let us covet, though we may not own."

CENTRAL PARK

ONE morn I met "My Lady" in the park.
The sky was cloudy and the day was dark.
Her step was slow, as if she chose to stray
Amid the groves, to while the hours away.
The Lake was silent. Not a murmuring breeze
Rose to disturb the image of the trees,
Mirrored within the water's waveless breast,
Where all the snowy Swan Boats seemed at rest.
Likely it was the day, but when we met,
I fancied in her look a sad regret,
Yet that sad glance with piercing sudden dart,
Lighted the dark recesses of my heart,
Strengthened my step beneath its sweet control,
And bade life's sunlight gladden all my soul.

"Clarice!" I cried: the fever burned my cheek,
My voice was trembling and I scarce could speak;
Unto my soul I felt a thrill creep o'er,
A weakening thrill, that bade me say no more,

And, but determination upward sprung,
Abashed, I would have stayed my faltering tongue.
"Clarice!" I cried: "Grant me thy pardon pray,
Should I confess to thee my wretched way.
Since first we met, my heart has humbled down,
Courted thy smiles: yea: idolized thy frown;
Always whene'er I humbly bend the knee,
Always, my prayers are always all of thee;
Last with the night they call thy face to view,
And with the morning plead the first for you:
Oh may I ever be thy trusted friend,
Worthy, platonic, to life's bitter end,
Guarding thy steps;" but ere I more confessed,
She turned toward me, pale and colorless.

"Hush!" now she cried. "Why bring as haunting guest,
Unto my soul, the sorrows of thy breast?
Let what we suffer here remain unsaid;
Let the relented past when past be dead,
Though in our bosoms may those secrets lie,
Gnawing our peace like vultures, till we die:

Were I to brood o'er grief long known to me,
Yon lake, to-night, should form my canopy;
Swift from its steep my being downward glide,
And give its watery shroud a welcome bride,
Facing the future fates without a tear,
Far less unkind, I fancy, there than here."
Then, as she slowly turned away her head,
And, as my glance surmised a tear, she said,
"Come! Let us go!" I marked her trembling there,
Folded her wraps about her form with care,
Offered my arm, and as we went our way,
Turned the heart-brooding thoughts to thoughts more gay.

Thus, by the Lake we wandered near its shore,
When she recalled the ball; that night of yore;
Then for her husband's health expressed a fear,
And though I gazed intent, I saw no tear,
But, as she breathed his name, I marked the while
A very sadness overcome her smile.

"Ah, could it be," I sighed, as on we went;
"Is this another heart by folly rent?
Is this a heart now hiding its distress
That sold its love?" A deep voice murmured:
"*Yes!*
She coveted his wealth, the common mold,
And traded beauty for his age and gold;
Strangled the very love that he might crave,
And cast its body in a gilded grave:
False to herself, false to the holy writ,
False to her God; dissembling hypocrite!"
As the voice ceased, and still I stood alone,
There stood great Moses with that slab of stone.

She heard him not. I gently pressed her arm,
Quickened the pace and caught her laughing charm.
Grief found no resting place; like some wild boy,
She, with a smile, could turn from grief to joy,
Or rather seem to turn, for none may know
But that a smile hides many a pang of woe.
Woe to that woman in whose harrowed breast,
Sorrow, the Vulture, builds its cankerous nest;

Feasting by night and day; its endless strife
Preys on the few remaining joys of life,
Feeds on the very food the soul might crave,
Watches her die and mocks beside the grave.
A "trap" came down the drive, we paused a while;
I marked a proffered bow, her answering smile,
Then on we strolled. "Our Minister," she said,
And thrice I saw him turn his reverend head;
Was I the cause of his intent review?
Unerring judgment far, far better knew.
His nervous steed assumed a slower pace,
The lines hung idly, from the slackened trace
I judged he wasn't grieving o'er his lambs,
Or thinking much just then of singing psalms,
And as I looked again: Behold—I saw
My friend, the Being, with his slab of Law,
When the old patriarch, to my surprise,
Held the tenth tablet to his reverend eyes.

A sudden breeze sprang up; the day was chill,
"My Lady Fair" complained of feeling ill;

Just indisposed: A trifle "*mal de tête*";
I took her arm and breathed a fond regret.
The druggist's perfumed shop we quickly sought,
Answered his smiles, the trifling cordial bought;
He bowed profusely to "My Lady Fair,"
Asked for her health: her husband's hopeful care,
And well I knew the compliments he paid
Were but the false ambassadors of trade.
Well had he learned the diplomatic art,
For as he marked us anxious to depart,
Came from within his bottle-sided den,
Opened the door and bade us call again,
But ere he turned from view; with muttering moan,
There too stood Moses with his slab of stone.

Where'er we went, whate'er we chanced to do,
It seemed the patriarch went with us too;
She did not see him, but had learned to know
The broken law that caused her endless woe;
Sinned without knowledge of it at the time,
Or must intent be there to make it crime?

I left her at the gate; she bade me stay,
Slow gave a parting hand; I went my way:
I knew her heart was food for gnawing dread;
I felt, the song-bird in her soul was dead,
Or that its voice was hushed unto her ear,
Lest it might sing a song she would not hear:
Thus, as I dreamed, o'er what I feared was true,
I caught her smile, as slow I turned from view.

LOST

THE months rolled by; sorrow came to my door,
Affliction entered, and I knew no more;
Until a tender hand had soothed my brow,
And some one said, "Lie still! You're better now."
And thus it was; through sickness for a time,
Slow convalescing and a change of clime,
I did not see "My Fair" for many a day,
Though oft I missed her from among the gay,
When languid time permitted me to go
In search of her, with feebled step and slow.
Oft would I watch the line, where trampling feet
Turned at The Circle on the busy street,
Where that great hero of the pathless waves,
Molded in bronze, still gale and tempest braves;
There, through the weary hours would I stand,
Trembling, alike in feverish limb and hand,
Spying with staring eyes amid the crowd,
Until it seemed my soul would cry aloud;
Though many lingered, many fair to see,
Happy and bright, none were Clarice to me.

Nightly I viewed, while wandering o'er the town,
The glittering lights on Broadway; up and down,
And, as amid their maze, a searching glance
Fancied her fleeting form, far in advance,
Quickly I stepped, forsook some strolling friend,
But to return heart-broken in the end;
Like the wrecked sailor, whose distracted brain,
Fancies some fog the shore, far o'er the main,
Plies his unwieldy craft, is thither borne,
Enters its bank, and dies of hope forlorn,
So did false fancy lift my hopes on high;
So in my bosom did those prospects die.

One day I strolled; ah, well, no matter where,
Hoping by fortune's chance to meet "My Fair."
The Manse was closed, and silence reigned supreme
O'er Hospitality's deserted scene.
Round the now sylvan porch the ivy wild,
Wandered untrained, a disobedient child,
And hung its tangled green o'er terraced wall,
In self-appropriation of it all.



The Manse was closed. Each barricaded room,
That once admitted light, emitted gloom,
To cast dark shadows o'er a ragged sward,
Where Milo's Venus, ghost-like, seemed on guard;
A weak defense. Now as I tearful-eyed,
My very soul, dismayed, thus to me cried:
"Alas; poor victim of Misfortune's ire,
See how in life thy varying hopes expire;
Like the fair flower, that with earliest dawn
Spreads a rare beauty that at eve is gone;
So foolish man, anticipating joys,
Finds that some fate converts them into toys.
No more at eve, an oft-invited guest,
You sink upon yon ivied porch to rest;
No more, responsive to the knocker's din,
Hear with delight the welcoming steps within:
Nor when with tardy foot you turn away,
Will longer, faltering whispers bid thee stay."
As up the path I trod, once known so well,
A nest, forsaken, from an arbor fell,
Fell at my feet, I gave a startled bound,
While bird-built fragments strewed the path around;

As if the haunted scene would add unkind
Its double desolation to my mind.
The spot that once a gardener's care had known;
Rank with neglect, by strangling shrubs o'ergrown,
Barred now the way; with piteous glance I eyed
The wild disorder where the roses died;
Died from a lack of care ere summer's noon,
For it was June time now; fair, flowery June.
Long there I stood amid the tangled maze
In more than speechless agony; to gaze,
Where fate permitted, from its varying store,
The sign of trade to desecrate the door,
Before my eyes in glaring letters bold,
That chilled my heart and turned its currents cold.
The drives of fashion knew her now no more;
Manhattan seemed a wild deserted shore;
Delmonico's, where oft she loved to dine,
Still entertained and overflowed with wine,
But 'mid the merry clink of glasses loud,
One sought-for face was absent from the crowd.
Where'er I chanced to go, no matter where,
It seemed all life, but no Clarice was there.

I sought acquaintances, none seemed to know.
One said: "Oh I forget! We're changing so!
Here in New York," she sighed; "we live so fast—
It matters not how gay has been the past,
How winsome or convivial the lot,
Soon are we missed, but sooner still, forgot."
Thus, thus it was; with many a weary dread,
I most despaired to mourn Clarice for dead.

One morn I wandered by the sounding sea;
No joy was in its waves, no joy for me.
"Trouble," I sighed; "ah, well; I'm not alone—
For the bold sea-heart throbs with sorrowing moan."
While as I watched the surging billows roll,
Swell after swell of grief engulfed my soul;
Then— Like the full-sailed ships slow passing by,
Prayed that my life might bid all care good-bye.
Turn from the shore, its tattered sails unfurl,
Enter the harbor of some other world,
Strand the wrecked hulk, no more to sail the sea;
Nor little care had I what port that be.

I viewed the angry coast. Near where I stood,
A ship's bones strangled in the battling flood;
O'er the wrecked carcass fettered on the strand
A solitary fish-hawk held command,
Where, 'mid its hungered cry so loud and shrill,
I heard the sea sweep in and out at will,
Just as the pounding waves of grief and woe,
Through my wrecked soul, seemed surging to and fro.
I watched the sea-gulls, in their coats of gray,
Skim o'er the waters in aerial play;
Think you their circling joys bade sorrow cease?
Rather instead they made its weight increase.
I marked the great swells come, the eddies go,
And heard the breakers with their crowns of snow,
As down they fell in ever constant roar,
Hopeless, like I crestfallen, on the shore,
While, as I viewed an ocean of unrest,
Came the chill air from off its troubled breast.
Long, long I stood, and in my sorrowing grief,
Gazed where the combers crossed the harrowing reef,

And as I looked nor changed my stubborn place,
In the white foam I thought I saw her face,
Saw her pale brow within the strangling brine,
Saw her deep eyes look pleading into mine:
The sea was cold; the tide was riding high;
She could not long survive; I gave one cry;
Leaped for the surf; but ere its waters gained,
A mighty hand and mightier arm restrained
That bore me down, and then, to chide my fears,
My dearest friend bent over me, in tears.
"Come! Come! my boy!" he said; "you must be ill;
The marsh is damp, the ocean's breath is chill,
The hour is late, the sun is nearly down,"
And took my arm and led me back to town,
When sickness knocked again upon my door,
And then, for weeks, for weeks, I knew no more.

THE RETURN

HOW long they nightly watched I cannot tell.
To me, it seemed one endless age of hell,
Until the nurse, who guarded me with care,
Said I might stroll one day, and get the air.
'Twas in the fall. I felt the bracing breeze
Lighten my step and give my senses ease,
Ease for a time, for all the world seemed strange;
Some call it ease, I call such ease but change,
For when the very soul is in decay,
What of this earth can take its sting away?
Now sorrow-bowed, and sick at heart and brain,
From disappointed search, long, long in vain,
I vowed again to stroll the watery shore
Up in the park, then vowed to search no more.
'Twas evening time, and plain I overheard,
In the tall trees, the twitter of the bird,
Where, one by one, they sought the leafy boughs,
Folded their wings and sang their vesper vows.

Off in the golden west the sun's last ray
Summoned its shafts to crown departing day;
Called all the clouds that floated in the sky
Unto its realm, and piled them up on high;
Took the tall pillars, dipped them in the flame
Of a full thousand dyes no tongue could name,
Then, as if finishing its grand desire,
Tossed them on high and set them all on fire.
Under the ledge, the Lake, now fast asleep,
Ceased from its rippling romp with shore and steep;
Like the tired child, that wearied in its joys
Closes its eyes and dreams amid its toys,
So the dark Lake, beneath the shadowy hill,
Ceased its carousal and lay calm and still.
How easy, now I thought, as there I stood,
Gazing afar o'er silent lake and wood,
How easy now to slip from yonder crest,
In the calm tide and be fore'er at rest,
There to forget the past when all is o'er,
Slumber alone, and dream of grief no more.
When, as I turned, uncertain what to do,
A woman stood before my startled view.

The day was gone. She saw me not, I know,
Her face was to the lake, her veil was low.
In deepest black she stood, nor gesture made,
Much like a Nun, more like the gathering shade.
I watched her crimp her silken skirts with care;
I saw her kneel, and bow her head in prayer,
Then heard a murmuring voice, and when 'twas o'er,
She sobbing sighed aloud: "He is no more—
One year has passed; Oh God! That year to me."
And loud I cried "Clarice!" for it was she.

Swift bounds the deer from cover to the chase—
Swift bounds the pheasant from its nesting place—
Swift bounds the waterfall from mountain side—
Swift bounds the tempest o'er the ocean's tide—
Swift bounds the antelope—But far more fleet
Bounds the true lover to his heart's retreat.
I grasped her proffered hands, but let them fall;
"Tell me! Clarice!" I cried; "Oh tell me all!"
But ere she chanced to speak, with muttered moan
There Moses stood with that tenth slab of stone.

She saw his face and shrank beneath its frown,
Each guttural moan I feared would strike her
down.
She would have fled within the sheltering shade,
Had not I cried; "Oh stay!" and she obeyed;
As there we stood within the gathering dark,
We heard in solemn tones, the Patriarch.
Heavy and low his voice rang on the night,
That in itself would chill the blood with fright;
Each solemn word within the gathered gloom,
Seemed like some hollow voice from out the tomb,
And thus he spoke: "Hear me! Poor human things!
I am the Prophet of the King of Kings;
This is the Law, nor mortals dare defy;
Left to my care on burning Sinai;
Hark ye, and heed: that all may learn anew—
Thou shalt not covet!" And he shrank from view.

Throughout the wood, where all had been so still,
Rang the wild echo from the distant hill;
All the rude rocks and woody vales around
Took up the voice and still prolonged its sound,

Until it seemed as if the very stones
Gave birth to tongues and tongues to guttural tones.
Backward she moved; I marked her trembling pace;
The veil that fell exposed her sorrowing face,
And from that very look I knew she heard
The thunderous echoes of the Prophet's word,
While through the gathering night she moved away,
As if her sad soul forced her to obey.
Backward she fled in darkness and despair.
Night clothed her form from view; the face and hair,
Like some weird spectral head, moved 'neath the trees,
Till in my veins I thought my blood would freeze.
"Clarice!" I cried aloud; "Clarice! My own!
Heed not the literal meaning of the stone!
Turn not away, nor dread the chastening rod,
Conquer thy fears and put thy trust in God,
Who, ever merciful, in judgment sits:
This be the Law, then all are Hypocrites!
Come back!" I cried; "Come back! Don't let me die!"
And all the wood reëchoed with the cry.

I watched the face relight with holy joy,
I saw her bound as bounds delighted boy,
Beheld her arms stretched toward me as she came,
Welcomed her love and caught its burning flame;
I marked her pause again, as in distress,
Press back the strands of each disheveled tress,
Ring wild her hands, as o'er her being rolled
The occult powers of strife 'twixt Mind and Soul;
Then, with a face as pallid as the snow,
And with a look aflood with human woe,
With forward stride, with one confiding bound,
And trembling shriek, that shocked the air around,
She cried, "Oh God!" as writhed her arms above;
"Oh God! I covet. Yes! I covet Love:
Covet the love rebuked within the past,
Covet the love that shall be mine at last":
And while the scream reëchoed fierce and wild,
Fell at my feet like some sweet sleeping child.

How long I kneeled, how long my darling slept,
How long I prayed, or longer still, I wept,

I do not know, for fleeting time to me
Was not a part of Love's sweet tragedy;
I only know, with joy that was complete,
I raised my trembling idol to her feet.
She stood apart; to sighing grief gave way,
As if still brooding o'er the yesterday,
Or was it not the grief, long known of yore?
Grieved but to fear I loved her now no more.
" Clarice," I sighed; " Oh cease each vain regret,
Come to my arms and let us both forget.
Unto my life you bring an absent joy
That I have never known, since, when a boy,
My mother fondly drew me to her knee,
Clasped me in love and cried, ' Oh come to me! '
Life is a race; o'er foolish and o'er wise
God is the judge and Love the only prize;
Castles of stone, or palaces of gold,
Mansions, and thrones, with storied wealth untold,
Freed from the soul's communion, can impart
Little of comfort to the aching heart.
Cupid is King; more often does he stray
'Mid the poor cottagers than 'mid the gay;

More often far his piercing arrows fly,
Where humbler lovers want to sit and sigh,
And truer seems to strike his mark with ease,
Here in God's Temple underneath the trees.
Cease from thy tears, as here by Heaven's grace,
Mingle our souls in one long fond embrace,
Vow by thy tear-stained cheeks now all aglow,
To follow me, no matter where I go";
"I vow," she cried; "I vow!" And sank to rest,
Her weary head on my unworthy breast.

"DE JURE"

I BENT my head and raised her lips to mine,
In fond embrace I felt her arms entwine,
I felt the heaving sigh, and sob, arise,
And caught their currents streaming from her eyes,
And heard the Love-song of her being roll
With trembling cadence o'er my starving soul;
Then, as we stood alone amid the trees,
Downward we sank upon our bended knees;
And, as our hands were clasped in holy love,
Raised our dim eyes in penitence above,
Called, as a witness, all the stars that shone,
And breathed this solemn prayer to Heaven's throne.



THE PRAYER

"YE sacred groves, ye hills and valleys bear
Most reverend testimony to our prayer:
King over Kings. God of all destiny!
Mark the poor things who humbly look to Thee.
Take from their souls each sorrow and regret,
Teach them to know that Thou wilt guide them yet,
May their repentance for the past atone;
Oh let them covet still, and let them own."

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CONSILIUM

AND thou, fair one, by glittering wealth deceived;
By every smile that age bestows aggrieved;
By sorrowing hours and brooding cares distressed;
By self-inflicted hate and woe oppressed;
To all of wifehood's sweet estate deranged;
Or worse, to tenderest sentiment estranged,
Until that torturing hour, you would forget,
Bids misery crown each moment with regret:
Teach thou the yet untaught; that they may know
The worse than death of life's mismated woe.
Teach them to know that loftier virtues lie
Beyond the vulgar power of wealth to buy;
Though countless thousands adulate the place,
Teach them to spurn December's cold embrace,
Nor be mere conscripts to the laws of men,
For holier laws than legal hands might pen
Have long decreed within the courts above
That Youth and Virtue wait alone on Love;
Let sad Experience her story tell,

This is the tale, fair maidens, mark thee well.
When Age from Beauty wins the nuptial vow,
And weaves its crown of thorns about her brow,
The captive Heart aloud in anguish cries,
And struggling Soul, rebukes, rebels, and dies;
Or bears its stain unto eternity,
As rivers bear pollution to the sea.
No more, decrepit Age, in slow decay,
Companions Youth than Night companions Day;
No more, they trend to linger side by side,
Than moving currents mate the sluggish tide;
Nor more does Age embellish Youth's repose
Than the decaying Leaf adorns the Rose.

FINALE

ISLAND Elysium! Oh enchanted Isle!
Turn thy soft ear from my dull song the while;
Peal forth the bells within thy tapering spires,
Cymbal thy joys and light thy myriad fires,
Gather the young, and let sweet voices chime,
For the day wanes and soon 'tis evening-time.
Life is a song; that song, however fair,
Trembling with cadence dies upon the air;
Time is a thief, who robs the passing hour,
Cheating us all at last of youth and power;
Then, ere too soon the golden moments flee,
Then, ere the song has ceased its melody,
Ere the much cherished day goes whirling by,
Ere the dark shades of eve dim Beauty's eye;
Oh let us covet while the sun shines bright,
Garner Life's pleasures, for 'twill soon be night.
Island Elysium! Oh enchanted Isle!
Turn thy soft ear from my dull song the while.





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